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THE ADVANTAGES OF NATIONAL AUSPICES OF RE-EDUCATION

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We are today in the midst of the greatest waste and the greatest saving of all history. The nations are paying daily for war purposes more than most wars have cost throughout. On the other hand, these same nations, some perforce, and some of their own volition, are saving more each day in food, fuel, clothes and even such incidentals as gasoline, than they ever proportionately saved before. The war spendings—except their legacy of debts—will cease, fortunately, within a measurable and we hope a reasonable time. The war savings will presumably go on, though in less degree, forever. Consequently, it is not extravagant to believe that the colossal outpourings of wealth which this orgy of war has forced will be redeemed, possibly in one generation, by the spirit of saving that, with many other hard and salutary lessons, war has taught.

Even though this view be too optimistic, the war, with frightful personal and national sorrow, is bringing home for all time one lesson that the United States above all other nations needed: the wickedness and the needlessness of waste. Under the brandishing of a certain Big Stick, we had begun to wake up to the evils of our material wastefulness; but when some of those predictions did not materialize,—when, for example, our hard wood forests did not disappear within ten years, when we learned of a single range of mountains in the Southwest that will yield ten million tons of coal a year for at least three thousand years, when we began to tap the atmosphere for nitrates and to double the yield of each acre of corn or cotton, we were in danger of recovering from our national fright and of believing again that Providence has supplied this favored people with substantially unlimited resources. Fortunately, however, consideration of the waste of inanimate products had turned our attention to a far more important matter: the squandering, the mistreatment, the failure to make adequate use of that greatest of natural resources, men and women.

The war has brought us face to face with the appalling fact that we are wasting, like prodigals, these precious human beings, and in three chief ways: First, by killing and maiming them in battle, cutting off at the same time what would have been the high grade progeny of thousands of selected young men; second, by complacently permitting civilian conditions which not only kill off a frightful percentage of children and youth before they can render any service to the world, but keep the adult population in a state of low efficiency; and third, by failing to bring out, through proper training and subsequent effective utilization, the latent powers of creative work existing within almost every boy and girl.

The second form of waste—that due to bad hygiene and lack of sanitation—we are overcoming by sound and widespread teaching in the field of right living. The third form of waste—that due to failure to bring out the latent powers of boys and girls, and of men and women—we are beginning to remedy by wise, purposeful and individualistic education. The first and most wanton form of waste—that due to deliberate killing and maiming in war—we can, and please God we will, put an end to by forming a League of Nations which shall root up war itself.

Meanwhile, however, we are fronted with the fact that, since 1914, the world has murdered millions of men and has caused at least equal millions to suffer physical or mental impairment through violence of war. For the dead we can do nothing; for the maimed living, we can and we ought to do everything that modern science, modern wisdom and modern appreciation of the hideous wastefulness of waste can do. The character and magnitude of the responsibility laid upon this country by this handicapping of tens and perhaps hundreds of thousands of young men, should be brought home to every citizen of the United States. The federal government is fully awake to the situation, but its servants can do little unless behind their efforts stand the force of educated public opinion and the support of enlightened public help.

So long as war lasts, this country ceases to be a huge group of individuals voluntarily associated for their common welfare. War has fused that group into an autocratic war machine with all individual rights merged into the common necessity of overthrowing autocracy for all time. From the one hundred and ten millions of us, that war machine selects, by the process of the draft, such special

millions and as many of those special millions as may be needed for absolute, decisive victory; but, whether we are within or whether we are without that special group, every one of us is an atom in the war machine and upon each of us depends the final outcome of the war. As such units, we can function only through the war machine itself,—which, under the Constitution, is the federal government—and so far as concerns the war (and that is the only present concern of the United States), all machinery of states and cities, all civilian organizations and all individual activities and rights absolutely disappear until the one supreme end, that of winning the war, shall be attained. The facing of this inexorable logic of a state of war is one of the hardest things to induce a democracy to do; and the amazing thing in this war is not that the people of the United States were so slow in understanding it, but that they faced it so quickly, so completely and with such total self-surrender.

The social and economic groups to which we belong, the towns and states in which each of us has legal residence are, for the time being, merely the culture in which the organism of war is nourished, the reserve out of which must come the material and moral sustenance of that fighting body of one and a half millions—soon to be five millions, and perhaps eventually to be fifteen millions—which constitutes the actual fighting machine. Whatever may be our personal relationship to any unit or units in that machine, whatever we, or those social and political organizations to which we belong, may do in connection with the war, we cannot escape the higher demand of the war machine as a whole, we cannot refuse, any more than the soldier can refuse, to obey its orders without question and without, at least audible, complaint.

While every one of us is a unit in the war machine, only males between 18 and 45 can be elements in the actual fighting machine; and, as a matter of fact, those who will get to the front will be mainly within the comparatively narrow limits of 19 to 35. Moreover, while all of us must sink our private wills into the public will of the war government, only those millions between 19 and 35 who constitute the actual fighting armies are required to surrender their bodies, as well as their wills, to the absolute dominion of that military General Staff which, under its civilian Commander-in-Chief, the President, determines the fate, from day to day, of individual men.

No government, however, and especially no democratic govern-

ment, can assume such dictatorial powers without taking on, at the same time, equal responsibility. Not only is that military establishment bound, so far as the exigencies of war permit, to conserve the life of every soldier, not only is it bound to see that, while fighting, he is fed, clothed, supplied with ammunition and in a military sense, properly supported; it is bound also to look after his physical, mental and moral health, to make every provision for his rescue and rehabilitation should he be wounded or sick, and to return him, when the war is over, or when he is unfit for further military service, to at least as good a position in the economic world as that from which, by military process, it inexorably took him, because he happened, through youth, strength and comparative freedom from family responsibilities, to be fit for fighting rather than for supporting service in the all-inclusive war machine.

To argue, as some men do, that the work of getting these citizen soldiers disabled in national war back into the economic world is a task for the state from which they came, the community in which they lived, the churches which they attended, or even of such a world wide organization as the Red Cross, is not only to misinterpret the Constitution which, in war, places all power and all responsibility in the federal government, but to do violence to common sense. For the federal government to cease its responsibility for the disabled soldier or sailor at the moment he leaves the hospital, is as impossible to imagine as it would be that it should desert him at the moment of his wounding, refusing to send stretcher-bearers to bring him back or to provide hospitals and surgeons for his rehabilitation. It is no kindness to patch up a man's body, if that restored organism is to be thrown on the industrial scrap heap. To mend a man just for the sake of mending him is to do him an ill service. The physical rehabilitation, far from being an end in itself, is simply the means for making him once more a normal being ready to take his place, alongside other normal beings, in the great business of daily work and daily life.

It is absurd even to imagine any country, least of all the United States, leaving its wounded uncared for on the battlefield or untended behind the lines. But it is almost equally absurd to suppose that the federal government would abandon this task of surgery and medicine to the chance kindness of stray physicians, willing and competent though they might be. The work of functional restora-

tion, we acknowledge without need of argument, is a task requiring complete organization by that power alone, the government at Washington, which can reach every man from every state and call to its assistance, if need be, every citizen of the United States. But what we have not seen, until this present war, is that this task of physical rehabilitation has its essential complement in that of vocational rehabilitation. Moreover, for this latter task, just as truly as for the former, is needed organization complete in itself and drawing its authority from that only source, the federal government, which can reach every state, and if need be, every man and woman in each state.

So strongly did this common-sense view of the situation appeal to Congress that, after due study and deliberation, it passed, unanimously in both Houses, in June of this year (1918) the Vocational Rehabilitation Act (known also as the Smith-Sears Act), placing as definitely upon a legally constituted Federal Board the responsibility for the retraining and placement of its injured soldiers and sailors as by statute and by age-long custom, the responsibility for physical rehabilitation had been placed upon those far older federal bodies, the Office of the Surgeon General of the Army and the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery of the Navy.

Under this Vocational Rehabilitation Act, the Federal Board for Vocational Education, made up, *ex-officiis*, of the Secretaries of Agriculture, Commerce and Labor and the Commissioner of Education, and of three other members appointed by the President, is charged with responsibility for the placing back in economic life and, if need be, for the training of every soldier and sailor so far disabled in military service as to be entitled to compensation under the War Risk Insurance Law. So long as that soldier or sailor needs daily hospital care or so long as he is adjudged fit to return to full or limited military service, he is the sole ward, of course, of the medical military authorities; but from the moment that he is discharged from military service, either because his disabilities are such as to preclude further army service, or because he is relieved from such duty by the coming of peace, he becomes automatically a ward of the Federal Board for Vocational Education, and, as such ward, has established rights which he alone and by his own free choice can surrender.

The chief of these rights are two: (1) To claim the aid of the

Federal Board in getting back into his old employment, or into such new employment as his capacities and his physical handicaps may make possible; and (2) to receive, through that board, such training for employment in agriculture, industry, transportation, commerce or the professions, as his wishes, modified by the reasoned views of the board as to his capacities and the opportunities in his special field of choice, may determine. Whether the board shall help to place him, whether it shall give him training before such placement, is wholly for the discharged soldier or sailor to decide; but, having elected to receive training, the board, together with the War Risk Insurance Bureau, assumes not only his support and that of his dependents, should he have any, during the process of training, but undertakes to follow him up, after placement, and to give him reasonable opportunity for further training should the first venture prove ill-suited to his capacities.

In order, as enjoined by the Vocational Rehabilitation Law, "to effect a continuous process of vocational training," the Federal Board will coöperate to such extent as it may be invited by the Surgeon General, in those vocational activities within the hospital which are believed to have also high curative value; and as soon as it is determined that a disabled man is unfitted for further military service and is destined, when restored as far as possible, for discharge, the Federal Board, through agents stationed in the reconstruction hospitals, will advise with the patient, determine his wishes, aptitudes and best prospects for economic success, and will make plans, either for his immediate placement upon discharge, or for such a course of training, be it one of months or of years, as may seem necessary for him, under the conditions of his former lack of training and his present physical handicap, to undertake.

Should a course of training be determined upon by the disabled soldier under advisement of the board, it will be conducted, other things being equal, in or near his former home or future place of employment, and will be carried on in that school or college (public or private), in that industrial or commercial plant, on that farm or in that mine, wherein, after proper investigation by the board, it seems likely that the disabled man will get the best training for the field of work which he purposes to follow. Unless extraordinary conditions demand, the board will not establish schools of its own, believing that every consideration calls for the use of existing

agencies; but the manner of teaching and the contents of the courses will be determined by the board and, in most instances, since it is to meet the special needs of a particular man, will be quite unlike the formal training given in the conventional school, or the somewhat haphazard training common in industrial enterprises.

Wherever the training may be given, it will be paid for by the board, which is empowered also to provide, where necessary, special equipment and appliances. The time and extent of the teaching will depend upon the needs and capacities of the disabled man; but the aim will always be to make up, as far as may be, his earlier deficiencies and to fit him, if possible, for a better economic service than that performed by him before the war, or which he would have been rendering had the war not taken place.

As far as possible, the job into which the man is to go will be determined before his training is begun, both that he may have the spur of a definite goal and that his training may be focussed upon a concrete opportunity. But he will not be hurried in his training, neither will he be allowed to dawdle, for the object of this process of preliminary education is quite as much to make the man ready for efficient general service in the world as it is for effective immediate service in the line of work which he has elected to follow. It is as far from the intention of the board to produce men having exaggerated notions as to the debt owed them by society, as it is to turn out half-baked workers to be tolerated simply because they are in some degree disabled. The jobs which these men undertake will be theirs because they are fitted to take them: they will hold them because they are ready to do a man's work; and while the board will see to it that they are not exploited, it will not ask any employer to keep a disabled soldier who cannot and does not "make good."

In this task of placement the board has the specific right, under the law, to ask the coöperation of the Department of Labor, and it has the general right, under the common debt which we owe to these disabled men, to seek the coöperation of every employer in every line of activity. There will arise many perplexing problems of wages, of employers' liability, of special equipment, of unusual conditions due to the man's handicap: each must be met as it arises, and all will be successfully wrought out, if there is that same fine spirit of coöperation in solving the new problems brought forward by after-war conditions as has been shown in meeting the unpre-

cedented difficulties of the war itself. The federal government will do its part by providing the money and the administrative machinery necessary to make every disabled soldier as effective in the economic field as he was effective on the field of battle; but the government can do little unless it has the hearty and intelligent backing of every school, every industry and every citizen upon whom it may call for aid in this great, complex task of fitting back into economic life the thousands of men who, taken out by the inexorable command of war and injured in the exercise of war, have been or are to be rehabilitated by the government. That government which had the right to summon them to the abnormal service of military duty, has no less right to call them back again to normal, life-long service upon the farm, in the shop or mine or counting-house, on the railroad, or in the several professions. Before it can exercise that right, however, it must have fulfilled, as it proposes to fulfil, its sacred obligation to make those men as efficient as possible, not only physically, but also vocationally in the widest possible field of effective economic service.